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## CHARLES HOOLE AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

### A PETTY SCHOOL. 1660

THERE is no calling more serviceable to Church and Commonwealth than this of a School Master; none that is more perplexingly toilsome where Art and Discretion, the two essentials of a School Master, are wanting — seeing we have especially to deal with children's imperfections, which are warily to be observed and censured.<sup>1</sup>

So Hoole strikes the keynote of his work: *A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching School*—the observing of children with a view of helping their “imperfections.” He does not indeed reach to the modern position that every stage of growth in life has a perfection which is appropriate and adequate to itself, but he does see (and herein consists the greatness of Hoole) that in the work of teaching it is the pupil who is the end to be considered. The teacher is the means to the promotion of the good of the child. The child is never to be regarded as merely a means to the teacher's good.

The *New Discovery* is divided into four small treatises dealing with :

1. A petty school.
2. The usher's duty.
3. The master's method.
4. Scholastic discipline.

The sections on the usher's duty and the master's method are chiefly concerned with the teaching of the classics (Latin, Greek, and Hebrew), whilst the treatise on a petty school deals with little children before the stage of studying grammar. Scholastic discipline is described as the way of ordering a grammar school, directing the not-experienced, how he may profit every particular scholar, and avoid confusion amongst a multitude.

It would, of course, be inexact to speak of Hoole as the first writer on the teaching of English to children. As early as 1590

<sup>1</sup> In Hoole's address at the beginning of his book to “All favourers of good learning, but more especially to the teachers of Grammar.”

Edmund Coote had written his *English Schoolmaster*, or text-book for teaching English spelling, and earlier still, in 1582, Richard Mulcaster in his *Elementarie* had insisted on the nobility of the English language, in comparison even with Latin and Greek.

Though there had been these writers on the study of English by children—yet Hoole's *Petty School* may be described as the first pedagogical treatise on the teaching of very little children in anything like a modern spirit. The headings of the chapters in the treatise are: I. How a child may be helped in the first pronunciation of his letters. II. How a child may be taught with delight to know all his letters in a very little time. III. How to teach a child to spell distinctly. IV. How a child may be taught to read any English book perfectly. V. Wherein children for whom the Latin tongue is thought to be unnecessary are to be employed after they can read English well. VI. Of the founding of a petty school. VII. Of the discipline of a petty school

There are two points of the first importance which show the difference between the treatment of English as a school-subject by Mulcaster and by Hoole. First, the teaching of reading and English are not dwelt upon by Hoole for the same reason as by Mulcaster, viz., the extreme interest and value of English as a subject to be acquired, but the study of English is inculcated as being one which the child can follow "with delight," if it be properly taught. It is a difference of point of view. Mulcaster is thinking of the subject, Hoole is thinking of the child. The second point is that whilst Mulcaster in his *Elementarie* regards English as a preparatory subject to entrance into the grammar school, Hoole has in mind the teaching of English as an appropriate discipline for those even who will not go on to learn Latin grammar. Here, then, he is at the point of view of the modern elementary school at its best.

The spirit of Hoole's teaching is well shown in his treatment of the teaching of the letters of the alphabet. He gives devices, such as the provision of twenty-four pieces of ivory with a letter on each. He suggests that the teacher should play with the child and showing him each as it is thrown on a table. And

again, he has the letters engraven on the sides of dice, so that by means of "sport" the child may be taught the letters. Further, he suggests pictures in a little book, and states that he has himself published a *New Primer*, wherein he has joined twenty-four pictures or images of some things whose names begin with different letters of the alphabet—where A stands for an ape and B for a bear, and so on. This probably was embodied by Hoole in the translation he made of Comenius's *Orbis Pictus*. He gives another method of teaching the alphabet by a little round box which contained a wheel with the letters of the alphabet, which showed themselves, as they went round, through a hole in the box. This had been invented by one who had taught a child two and one half years old, with the greatest success. As to which Hoole remarks:

By this instance you may see what a propensity there is in nature betimes to learning, could but the teachers apply themselves to their young scholar's tenuity; and how by proceeding in a clear and facile method that all may apprehend, every one may benefit more or less by degrees.

In spelling, Hoole observes that some teachers pronounce their children mere blockheads and incapable of learning anything, when by fitter methods other teachers declare that they have not met with "any such thing as a dunce amid a great multitude of little scholars." He could not have expressed more strongly the value of the study of methods in relation to the capacity of children. He has a belief in children, and not much in the traditionary methods. We could imagine that it is Pestalozzi or Froebel who is speaking when Hoole says (quoting as authorities Cicero and Erasmus<sup>1</sup>): "It is as natural for a child to learn as it is for a beast to go, a bird to fly, or a fish to swim. . . . And could the Master have the discretion to make their lessons familiar to them, children would as much delight in being busied about them, as in any other sport, if too long continuance at them might not make them tedious." He praises the books on reading written by Mr. Roe, Mr. Robinson<sup>2</sup>, and Mr. Coote. "Their books," he says, "are to be had in print, but every one hath not the art to use them."

<sup>1</sup> This was said also by Quintilian.

<sup>2</sup> I cannot find any trace of either Dr. Roe or Mr. Robinson's books.

Hoole devotes a chapter to children for whom Latin is thought unnecessary. He disputes the position of those who think Latin unnecessary for boys who go into trades, or those who are to be "drudges" at home or those employed in husbandry. He holds (1) that even a little Latin is useful in "the understanding of *English* authors. The ground of learning Latin for the sake of English is interesting. (2) Abroad, it is said, every peasant is able to converse in Latin. Why should England be behind? (3) The non-improvement of children's time after learning to read throws open a gap for all loose kind of behaviour. "Being then (as is too commonly to be seen, especially with the poorer sort) taken from the school, and permitted to run wilding up and down without any control, they adventure to commit all manner of lewdness, and so become a shame and dishonour to their friends and country."<sup>1</sup>

These reasons, Hoole considers, might induce parents to keep their children at school longer so as to learn Latin. If they do not, then he holds it would be better that they should go to another school—a writing (as opposed to a grammar) school, where they should be helped (1) to keep up their English by reading a chapter at least once a day; and (2) be taught to write a fair hand; (3) be exercised in arithmetic and other subjects.<sup>2</sup> This is the first instance I know of the collocation of reading, writing, and arithmetic as the main subjects of teaching in a school. Hoole's suggestion goes further. In this writing school there should not be in his opinion *any* teaching of Latin—not even of the accident. This should be entirely reserved for the grammar school.

In the place of the Latin accident (which young children "do neither understand nor profit by") they are to read not only the ordinary religious books used for the purpose,<sup>3</sup> but also delightful books of English history, as the *History of Queen Elizabeth*, or poetry, as Herbert's *Poems*, Quarles' *Emblems*. This is

<sup>1</sup> See article on Samuel Harnar (*Educational Review*, June 1894, London) for still more emphatic statement of this.

<sup>2</sup> *Petty School*, pp. 25–26.

<sup>3</sup> Brinsley's list was confined to books on religion and manners.

the earliest passage known to me which suggests the teaching of English literature by reading set books. Hoole's arguments are commonplace enough now, but are remarkable for his own time :

By this means they (children) will gain such a habit and delight in reading as to make it their chief recreation, when liberty is afforded them. And their acquaintance with good books will (by God's blessing) be a means so to sweeten their (otherwise sour<sup>1</sup>) natures that they may live comfortably towards themselves and amiably converse with other persons.

It appears that petty schools were frequently—at the time of the Commonwealth, as before and after—in the hands of poor women or other necessitous persons.<sup>2</sup> Hoole urges that this state of things should not be allowed to continue—if for no other reason, since the first principles of religion and learning have to be taught there. He suggests that rich people ought to provide endowments so that good teachers can be attracted. With a fixed yearly stipend—Hoole suggests at least twenty pounds a year—and convenient dwelling, with liberty to take young children to board and to ask fair fees from those able to pay, the master might be expected to take all such poor boys as could conveniently attend the schools *free of cost*. A post on such conditions, Hoole thinks, would attract a man of good parts. The qualifications for such a master of the petty school are given :

I would have him to be a person of a pious, sober, comely, and discreet behaviour, and tenderly affectionate towards children, having some knowledge of the Latin tongue, and ability to write a fair hand, and good skill in arithmetic, and then let him move within the compass of his own orb, so as to teach all his scholars (as they become capable) to read English very well, and afterwards to write and cast accounts. And let him not at all meddle with teaching the accidence, except only to some more pregnant wits, which are intended to be set forwards to learn Latin, and for such be sure that he ground them well, or else dismiss them as soon as they can read distinctly and write legibly, to the Grammar School.

Hoole's *Petty School*, then, I take to be the first adumbration of a modern elementary school scheme. His suggestion does not go far in the way of organization, for he merely urges those

<sup>1</sup> This is a direct borrowing of Mulcaster's words regarding music.

<sup>2</sup> "As a mere shelter," he adds, from beggary.

who are rich to give endowments toward the erection and endowment of petty schools in those places with which they are by birth or otherwise connected. But in his plan of studies—reading, literature, writing, and arithmetic—he clearly defined what was afterwards adopted as the basis of the work of the early elementary schools.

In the chapter on the discipline of a petty school, Hoole insists that the teaching of good manners is a main part of good education. Accordingly such books as *Erasmus de Moribus* and *Youth's Behaviour* must be taught. The school hour is 8 o'clock, or, in a case of weakness, 9. Neatness in dress and cleanliness are to be insisted upon. Play is to be allowed before school. Obeisance is to be made to the master on his coming into the school. There is to be roll-call, a reading of a chapter, a short prayer fitted for the school, and a hymn. There are four forms, in the lowest of which the letters of the alphabet are to be learned from the *Primer*. In the second spelling is to be learned from the Single Psalter. In the third reading is learned from the Bible. The boys in the fourth are exercised in reading, writing, and casting accounts, whose lessons "may be in such profitable English books as the parents can best provide and the master thinks fittest to be taught." Striving for places is to be encouraged; corporal punishment discouraged. The Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and Catechism are to be known to all, and regular hours set aside for them.

Morning school ends at 11, and afternoon school begins at 1 o'clock and goes on till 5 o'clock in the summer and 4 o'clock in the winter. Monitors are to be used. No more than forty boys are to be allotted to one man. If more are in a form a master will have to make use of scholars to teach the rest,<sup>1</sup> which Hoole considers occasions "too much noise and disorder and is no whit so acceptable to parents or pleasing to the children be the work never so well done." So Hoole proposes in petty schools at least one master to every forty boys, though he

<sup>1</sup> The first notice of this pupil-teacher system I have come across is in Thomas Popeson's ordinance (1592) to Bungay School (Suffolk): "Some of the hyggest forme, shall weekly, by course instruct the first forme, both in their accidence, and also in giving them copies to write."

does not hesitate to suggest it will be well in addition to have a writing-master and a "supervisor or inspector."

Hoole states that in the chief points of this description he is speaking from his own experience, for he had had a few boys as preparatory pupils and had intended to adjoin a petty school to his private grammar school at the token house in Lothbury, London, "and there to have proceeded in this familiar and pleasing way of teaching, had I not been unhandsomely dealt with by those whom it concerned for their own profit sake to have given me less discouragement."

We are reminded by this complaint of John Brinsley's chapter<sup>1</sup> on the "Discouragements of Schoolmasters by Unthankfulness of Parents. In spite of all, says Brinsley, we schoolmasters "must labour to be faithful in our places, in the best courses and kinds." So, too, thinks Hoole, and what he cannot accomplish himself he writes for the suggestion of others. "In the meantime I entreat those into whose hands this little work may come, to look upon it with a single eye, and whether they like or dislike it, to think that it is not unnecessary for men of greatest parts to bestow a sheet or two at leisure time upon so mean a subject as this seems to be."

Elementary education is now secure against being esteemed a "mean" subject, and now the cause is won, Charles Hoole's name as a pioneer claims recognition, and homage from all "favourers of good learning," and "more especially" from "teachers."

"I humbly request," says Hoole, of the trustees and subscribers, "that as they have happily contrived a model for the education of students and brought it on a sudden to a great degree of perfection, so they would also put to their hands for the improvement of school-learning, without which such choice abilities as they aim at in order to the ministry cannot possibly be obtained."

Hoole refers to a prospectus issued by Matthew Poole, the well-known annotator of the Bible, in 1658. It is entitled "A Model for the maintaining of Students of choice abilities at the University and principally in order to the Ministry. With

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xxxiii, *Ludus Literarius*.



Epistles and Recommendations and an Account of the settlement and Practice of it in the Universities from the doctors there." It is an urgent appeal for funds to maintain forty scholars in each university, who while undergraduates were to have £10 each per annum, while bachelors £20, and when masters £30. They were to be examined half-yearly, and to have employment or preferment found them according to their powers, on completion of their studies. Calamy says that some £900 per annum was actually collected.

The exhibitions generally were to be given to "such as intend the ministry . . . , yet so, as that the trustees may upon weighty reasons and sparingly dispose of some of them, to such, as, though not intending the ministry, may be other ways eminently serviceable to the Church or Commonwealth." Hoole evidently thinks schoolmasters should be included.

For reprint of Matthew Poole's "Model" and further details see Professor J. E. B. Mayor's *Cambridge in the 17th Century: Autobiography of Matthew Robinson*.

Hoole states that Dr. Bathurst, lately deceased, and Mr. Gouge had promoted petty schools to which poor children might be sent and be taught *gratis*.

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NOTE.—In his *Usher's Duty* Hoole says that in the interim of getting the accidence by heart in the grammar school, children lose the ability of reading English which they brought from the petty school. Children are "therefore sometimes taken and sent back again to a mistress or a dame to learn English better."

It is quite clear that petty schools were taught by mistresses and dames and these not of the most learned kind. Edmund Coote's *English Schoolmaster*, the twenty-sixth edition of which appeared in 1656, shows us the common sort of master of a petty school. He says: "I direct my speech to the *unskilful*, which desire to make use of it for their own private benefit and to such *men and women of trade* as tailors, weavers, shopkeepers, seamsters and such others, as have undertaken the charge of teaching others. . . . (With this book) thou shalt teach thy scholars with better commendation and profit than any other (not following this order) teacheth, *and thou mayest sit on thy shop-board, at thy looms, or at thy needle, and never hinder thy work to hear thy scholars, after thou hast once made this little book familiar to thee.*"

Teaching of little children was therefore a means of eking out a livelihood to the inferior sort of workmen and women who had wholly or partly to provide for themselves.